

# THE BOSTON INFORMER

No. 6 Newsletter for the Downtown, Waterfront, North End, Beacon Hill, South Station and West End January-February 1993

## Welcome to The Boston Informer!

The goal is simple: provide concise public information on construction projects, planning and whatever else affects life in Boston. *The Boston Informer* was created by us—an architect, a transportation planner and a management consultant—to meet this goal.

Welcome to *The Boston Informer*! Anthony Casendino, Anne McKinnon, Chris Fincham.



## Charles River Crossing

**Scheme Z Update:** Just when it looked as if the successor to Scheme Z, 8.1.D Modified, was an alternative acceptable to all, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is questioning the efficacy of the plan. FHWA's concerns center

around aquatic impacts of the tunnel under the Charles River from the North Station area to Charlestown. The Army Corps of Engineers also raised concerns about the tunnel's potential impacts.

In response to FHWA's questions, the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD) has asked the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA), currently reviewing the 8.1.D proposal, to include in the scope for extra environmental work for the revised Charles River Crossing a requirement that an alternative that involves no tunneling under the River also be evaluated.

The revised Charles River Crossing plan, 8.1.D, features a tunnel under the River to carry northbound traffic to I-93 and to the Tobin Bridge. Support for the tunnel came both from environmentalists who wanted to reduce the bridge's mass over the River and from planners who wanted to improve the traffic system around North Station.

This recent request to permit study of a non-tunnel alternative and the recent resignation of key undersecretary of transportation who led the 18-month Scheme Z restudy, Stan Durlacher, fueled speculation that the state actually wants to pursue another direction.

## Planning and Development

"Nothing endures but change." They say the best time to make a change is mid-term in an administration, two years before the next election. The Weld administration is at its mid point, and changes are happening fast in many agencies and divisions under its control. Change,

too, is affecting the so-called independent authorities such as the MBTA, Massachusetts Turnpike, Massport, and MWRA.

The impact of change in personnel, policy, style, etc. is always hard to gauge, and it is often impossible to immediately identify a change as positive or negative. But it's important to keep an eye on the big picture and at least be aware of the changes that are happening. *The Boston Informer* can help you watch where they're going and tell you where they've been.

## Departures:

Stan Durlacher, undersecretary of transportation  
Bob Sloane, undersecretary of transportation  
Ron MacKay, assistant general manager for MBTA Operations  
Buzz Constable, assistant undersecretary of transportation  
Michael Sharff, undersecretary of transportation for transit  
Joe Aiello, assistant general manager for budget and planning  
Dorrie Pizzella, MBTA construction (So. Boston Piers project)  
Frank Bracaglia, Massachusetts Highway Department  
Robert Baum, Executive Office of Transportation and Construction (EOTC), general counsel  
Monica Staaf, assistant undersecretary, EOTC  
Richard Dimino, Boston Transportation Dept. commissioner  
Chip DeWitt, legal counsel, Massport  
Peter Shields, Central Artery mitigation chief  
Susan Tierney, secretary, Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA)

Janet McCabe, head of EOEA's Environmental Policy Act unit  
Jane Garvey, aviation director, Massport

## New positions:

Josh Lehman, U.S. Dept. of Transportation, to Massachusetts bicycle and pedestrian coordinator  
Mark Primack, GreenSpace Alliance, to EOTC, environmental policy deputy secretary  
Valerie Southern, Federal Highway Administration, to EOTC, capital and transportation policy deputy secretary  
Robert Albee, from Central Artery director of right-of-way to director of construction services  
Trudy Cox of Rhode Island to Secretary, Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs  
Toye Brown, MBTA Board of Directors, to EOTC, surface and transportation programs and policy deputy secretary



## Surface Reconstruction Plan

Plans for the surface roadways, sidewalks and park above the depressed Central Artery are being developed for submission to the Federal Highway Administration to ensure funding in the distant future. Although the planners acknowledge that the actual design of the surface environment will evolve and develop further, the current planning exercise has brought to the fore an issue critical to shaping the nature of the land above the Artery. The number of lanes on the surface roadways—now shown as three lanes and parking—has become an issue of controversy. The Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Report describes the surface with three-lane roadways along most of its length. The Secretary of Environmental Affairs admonished the state to build no more than three lanes in each direction, one of which may be parking, and any proposal to increase the total number of lanes will require the scrutiny of a Notice of Project Change. The secretary also said that pedestrian and bicycle considerations should be stressed. Collectively, the secretary's suggestions reflected a widely articulated desire to maintain the surface environment as a pedestrian, non-highway experience. Relatively low traffic volumes and speeds, narrowed pavement widths, traffic calming techniques, and intersections designed for people, not 18-wheel trucks, are implied by the secretary's instructions. The controversy over the number of travel lanes will come into the public arena in May or June when the state officially informs the Environmental Affairs office that it wants to increase the number of lanes.

Review of the current plan, however, by pedestrian- and bicycle-advocacy groups and residents, has led to the conclusion by some that roadway-design guidelines are being used as design standards and that the plan does not represent the reality of Boston.

A new state law protects the enjoyment of the Public Garden by prohibiting the construction of any building that would cast a new shadow on the Garden after 10 a.m. from March 21 to October 21. A similar law protects the Boston Common.

## BEACON HILL

## BOSTON COMMON

As part of a plan to wipe out Boston's Adult Entertainment District (The Combat Zone) the BRA bought the foreclosed China Trade Center at the corner of Boylston and Washington streets for \$1.5 million. The BRA intends to preserve the building as office/retail space and prevent adult entertainment uses from going in. However, it appears that there is already a deed restriction prohibiting such uses. Further, the building was bought without City Council approval although two private concerns were interested in the building for commercial uses....

The Division of Capital Planning and Operations recently announced plans to build a new 420,000-square-foot courthouse building for the Suffolk County Courthouse on a vacant Government Center lot behind the Hurley and Lindemann buildings on New Chardon Street. The new building will house the Boston Juvenile, Boston Housing, Suffolk Probate and Family Courts, the state's Land Court and Court administrative offices and affiliated agencies, as well as the Suffolk County Registry of Deeds. The BRA is disputing the purchase price of the lot, \$5 per square foot paid in 1965, noting that the fair market value of the land is about \$175 per square foot. Architect: Kallman McKinnell and Wood.

Also associated with this project is the renovation of Old and New buildings of the Suffolk County Courthouse in Pemberton Square. The Supreme Judicial Court, the Appeals Court, and the Social Law Library will occupy the Old Courthouse and the Suffolk Superior court and Boston Municipal Court will occupy the New Courthouse.

Yes, there will be a new Boston Garden, but several projects related to the new Garden are either behind schedule or are no where near as rock-solid certain (!). The 1,300-car MBTA garage at North Station, planned for completion by 1993, was to provide replacement parking during North End/North Station utility relocation (good thing that's delayed). Plans for the Green Line relocation and Green Line/Orange Line superstation are no where to be found.

## NORTH STATION

## NORTH END

Burroughs Wharf, a 69-unit condominium complex of two seven-story buildings, is now scheduled to be completed in the fall of this year after a three-year delay. Initially delayed because of fire-code violations, the project was plagued by foreclosure, bank failure and government agency action. The new owners, Birnmen Associates of Wellesley (a partnership that includes Turner Construction), will finish the interiors and bring it into compliance with fire codes. The 69 units are priced between \$235,000 and \$1.1 million, about half the initial 1989 offering.

## What They're Saying

"The bottom line is, the governor runs the show."  
*Kevin Kutz, spokesman for Economic Affairs Secretary Tocco*

"The planned 1995 demolition of 150 Causeway Street is not an ironclad date."  
*James Kerasiotes on how the Artery delay could aid the Boston Garden project.*

"This is mainly a bunch of license application forms stapled together."  
*Vivien Li, director of The Boston Harbor Association, on the Central Artery's consolidated Chapter 91 license application.*

The South Boston Piers area, once envisioned as a "new downtown Boston" with millions of square feet of development, now has one new 90,000-square-foot office building. Developed by the Boston Wharf Company, the nine-story building at 44 Farnsworth St. near the Fort Point Channel will be close to the MBTA's proposed transit line at Northern Avenue, projected for completion in 1999, and close to the new Federal courthouse on the Fan Pier, scheduled to open in 1997.

## What's Up?

1 The Central Artery/Tunnel project has applied for a "consolidated" Chapter 91 Waterways license for project activities within 250 feet of water or between the first public road and water, whichever is closer. The application is a hodge-podge of segments of the project as it crosses the Chapter 91 boundaries in many places. Some of the activities subject to Chapter 91 regulations include capping and filling Spectacle Island and parts of utility relocations. Environmental organizations such as Conservation Law Foundation and The Boston Harbor Association protested the lumping together of such disparate items.

2 The start of gas line relocation work (Central Artery contract C14C3) downtown was announced last month and the construction is expected to take about one year. The 30-inch line will run along Purchase, Pearl, High, Batterymarch, Custom House, and Broad streets. Construction will be done at night (7 p.m. to 7 a.m.) in business-only areas (Purchase, Pearl and High streets), and in the daytime in areas with residents (Batterymarch, Custom House and Broad streets). High Street will be closed after business hours between Oliver and Pearl streets from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. during the initial work stage.

3 Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) finances are in a state of flux. Director Douglas MacDonald announced that the cost of cleaning up Boston Harbor could be reduced by \$1.3 billion and the MWRA Advisory Board then proposed an additional \$1.4 billion cut without harming the environment. The proposed Clinton federal budget, instead of providing one-half of the cleanup, as promised in the campaign, has cut out the modest \$100 million per year already being paid under the Bush Administration.

If both MacDonald's and the Advisory Board's cuts are implemented, water and sewer rates for a family for four would rise to \$1,065 per year in 1999 instead of the first estimate of \$1,270. The equivalent yearly rate in 1992 was about \$590, less than half the cost in most Western European industrialized countries.

As a result of higher local rates and perceptions of even higher to come, consumption of water has dropped. The drop in use is also a result of leaks being repaired.

4 Governor Weld's recent declaration of support for the North Station to South Station rail connector in the Central Artery alignment has led to the creation of a Task Force to look at the feasibility of including the rail link in the Central Artery project. The Task Force is headed by Guy Rosmarin and is made up of officials and engineers from MHD, MBTA; Central Artery consultants; planners; architects; and citizens. The new emphasis on multimodalism has helped push the state to look at incorporating the rail link. Although the proposed changes in Charles River Crossing have delayed the Artery project itself, a key parameter imposed on the Task Force is that including the rail link shall not significantly change the Artery design!

The Third Harbor Tunnel is not the only thing coming to Logan Airport. Massport's Logan Airport Modernization Program (LAMP) is a \$1.5 billion maintenance and upgrade project and includes replacing Terminal A; renovating international Terminal E; a new Customs and Immigration facility on the site of the parking lot at Terminal E; and redesign of the airport roadway system. Projects to be built later include a new fire station and satellite fire/rescue facility. Massport recently filed Environmental Notification Forms with the state to start the environmental review process for Terminal A, satellite fire station, and Terminal E, fourth floor. Another Massport activity is the LOGIC (Logan Growth and Impact Control) study which has looked at the impacts of a range of passengers (between 35 million and 55 million) and strategies for mitigating the impacts.

## Whom do I contact??

**Central Artery Construction Updates**  
...call CAT-INFO (228-4636)

**Pothole Hotline (Boston)...**call Public Works  
Department, 482-5300

**For information on Bikes on the T Program**  
...call David Dance, MBTA, 722-5799.



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**Bride of Z ?**

## You were asking...

- Q. What's happening with the \$70 million in park improvements to the Charles River Basin ?**
- A.** The master plan for the Charles River Basin, prepared for the MDC by Carr, Lynch, Hack and Sandell planners, estimates the cost at over \$120 million and recommends that design of improvements on parcels be done before the Central Artery project work. Included are the park/ferry improvements at Lovejoy Wharf and North Point West.
- Q. How will I get from the North End to downtown on foot during (and after) Artery construction?**
- A.** With great difficulty. During construction: plans show enclosed, zigzag walkways across the construction path, which present serious security problems. After construction: all pedestrian movements will be blocked by Artery on- and off-ramps except at Hanover Street, a new extension of Sudbury Street, and Thatcher Street.
- Q. Will the new Charlestown tunnels (CANA) ever connect to I-93 or does the Charles River Crossing problem need to be resolved first?**
- A.** Two temporary loop ramps have been proposed to connect the tunnel under City Square from the Tobin Bridge to I-93 north and I-93 south to the tunnel to the Tobin Bridge/Route 1. These ramps are similar to those originally evaluated for the CANA project but are one-lane each. The existing overhead ramps will be removed. The Environmental Affairs office ruled that no further environmental review is required for this proposal.

## The Boston Informer

Published by ATC Information, Inc., six times yearly in Boston, Massachusetts. President: Anthony Casendino; vice-presidents, Anne McKinnon, Chris Fincham.

*The Boston Informer* is available by mail only. \$20.00 per year. Inquiries may be sent to PO Box 1473, Boston, MA 02205-1473. Phone (617) 723-3584.

Subscription information and inquiries: call 723-3584

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A publication of ATC Information, Inc.

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**Boston, MA 02205-1473**